



Department of Conservation and Recreation
Stewardship Council Meeting
April 13, 2007
Community Boating, Boston, MA

Meeting Minutes

Stewardship Councilors in Attendance: Chairman Dick Cross, Councilors Julian Agyeman, Christina Crowley, Michael Dutton, Whitney Hatch, Laura Johnson, Henry Lee, John Natoli.

Public Attendees: Dick Miller, Cochituate State Park Advisory Committee; Carole Berkowitz. Protect Our Water Resources; Mike Ryan, Friends of the Fells; Heidi Ricci, Mass Audubon; Tom Philbin, Conservation and Recreation Campaign; Mike Hurley, Friends of Robinson State Park; Claudia Hurley, Friends of Robinson State Park; Carol Gilmour, Friends of Robinson State Park; Steve Kaiser, Association of Cambridge Neighborhoods; and James McCaffrey, Sierra Club.

DCR Staff in Attendance: Acting Commissioner Priscilla Geigis, Acting Chief of Staff Stephanie Cooper, Tom LaRosa, Patrice Kish, Gary Briere, Jonathan Yeo, Nikki Belmonte, Marcelle Valentin, Joe Rotondo and Jack Donahue.

I. Call To Order (1:05 p.m.), Chairman Cross

- a. Chairman Cross reconfirmed three *Strategic Goals* which are: to have an agency capable of delivering world class conservation and recreation services; to demonstrate progress towards world class parks; and to generate public appreciation and support for the resources we manage.
- b. There has been no news on the appointment of a new Commissioner, but process is moving forward and the Council will have some advance notice of the appointment.

II. Commissioner's Report, Acting Commissioner Priscilla Geigis

- a. Acting Commissioner Geigis spoke at the Civilian Conservation Corps 74th anniversary ceremony.
- b. DCR in cooperation with EOEEA's OPPP program sponsored the first Park Stewards conference. Approximately 100 friends and partner organizations attended.
- c. Park Serve Day, a statewide park clean-up day, is scheduled for May 12. The public will have the opportunity to participate in one of 35 projects with a total capacity of 3,200 volunteers. DCR is working closely with the Secretary and Governor's offices on this initiative. More information will be available April 20 when the website goes live for registration.
- d. Upcoming Earth Day activities, such as the Charles River clean up on April 21; will be posted on the website.
- e. A new partnership model is being piloted for the Schooner Ernestina where the newly appointed Ernestina Commission will work to develop a business plan for long term financial stability for operations and maintenance of the vessel with the goal of reestablishing sea sailing education programs.
- f. DCR announced a series of public meetings for the heritage landscape inventory program. The pilot application will be in the Blackstone district.
- g. DCR held its first statewide Waterfront Safety Training and Supervisor's Academy. Over 200 field staff participated. This will be an annual event.
- h. Acting Commissioner Geigis attended the National Association of State Park Directors biannual meeting. The board is working with University North Carolina to create a leadership training school for park professionals based on core competencies.
- i. DCR professionals made two presentations at the New England Training Institute on facility and asset management and off-highway vehicle management.

- j. Maintenance standards and schedules for the metro Boston area have been completed. The street sweeping program began on Apr. 3 and nearly all of urban ball fields opened on Apr. 1. Some campgrounds will open on April 15.
- k. The House budget recommendations were released this week. The operating budget fell \$85,000 short of the House 1 budget. (See Finance committee update below for details.)
- l. The Metropolitan Beaches Commission released their report on the 14 urban beaches.
- m. DCR was allowed to move forward on hiring 21 full time employees, including the long-awaited RMP planner backfill.
- n. Tracy Lawrence and Nikki Belmonte are both leaving the agency.

Councilor Lee inquired about the status of the Storrow Drive tunnel reconstruction. Acting Commissioner Geigis reported that DCR is in the process of gathering additional information and weighing the 4 alternatives. No decisions have been made and DCR is working with community focus groups. There is no definitive timeline on when a decision will be made.

III. Committee Updates and Meeting Schedules

a. Finance Committee, *Whitney Hatch*

- i. The gap analysis project has been delayed due to Stephanie Cooper's shifted responsibilities; however DCR supervisors met recently to discuss standards.
- ii. The House budget (\$89M) didn't except consolidation of accounts, and directed the "expansion" funds to the beaches (\$1.3M), CA/T parks (\$1.3M), and rinks (\$1M). Decreases fell in State Parks retained revenue, urban parks and State House rangers.
- iii. Councilor Hatch met with House and Senate Ways and Means chairs to discuss the proposal of a \$750,000 line item amendment that will be filed by the Stewardship Council that is in favor of the account consolidation and provides funding for 33 critical hires, urban rink leases, performance standards, gap analysis, regular statewide visitor services surveys, RMP program and implementation of FAMIS to rest of state. The Council would be responsible for reporting back to legislature on the line item. The letter was reviewed and voted upon for submission. *All in favor*

b. Resource Management Plan Committee, *Henry Lee*

- i. The Committee hopes to meet before the May meeting to discuss the draft Stoneybrook RMP draft.
- ii. The Mt. Watatic RMP is being circulated and public comments are due by May 9.

c. Policy Committee, *Julian Agyeman*

- i. See below.

IV. Historic Parkways Policy, *Laura Johnson*

- a. The policy was reworked and posted for public comment over the last month. Section 3 no longer contains exception language, but instead built in a definition of public participation. The policy states that the Commissioner will present the annual parkway improvement plan at the November Council meetings. The footnote in the policy gives likely examples of exceptions to the guidelines. The Committee recommends this version for approval, but would like Councilors to weigh in. Other Councilors and members of the public stated their concern for how public disagreements over guideline exceptions would be handled.
- b. The Council made a motion to vote on the policy with an amendment to call the "annual parkway improvement plan" the "annual parkway report." Over next 30 days an outline for the report will be drafted and discussed at the next Council meeting. *All in favor*

V. Off-Highway Vehicle, Gary Briere

- a. An announcement was made on Monday that Georgetown-Rowley State Forest will be closed to motorized trail recreation this year. Mr. Briere met with the Friends group to talk about how the decision was made.
- b. Mr. Briere is working with the Environmental Police and DCR rangers on signage, communicating with local police departments. Undersecretary Phil Griffiths is setting up a working group to: (1) examine what regulations exist, what needs to be added and what needs to be changed; (2) examine the existing capacity for enforcement; (3) assess what can be done under existing regulations and resources, and; (4) work on an education plan, such as developing relationships between dealers and land owners to create a network. This work will most likely not be complete for Aug. 2, but Mr. Briere anticipates putting something together for that date.

VI. No Child Left Inside / Great Parks Pursuit, Priscilla Geigis

- a. Acting Commissioner Geigis gave a presentation on the The No Child Left Inside initiative, designed to help today's children re-connect with the great outdoors while building the next generation of environmental stewards.
- b. The premiere event for this campaign is the Great Park Pursuit in May. Teams compete for prizes over a 6-week period, following clues revealed on the custom website (to be launched at the end of April). All are encouraged to participate by spreading the word, registering for the event, volunteering to help at the parks or identifying sponsors.

VII. Approval of Minutes from 02/02/07 and 03/02/07 Meetings – All in favor

It was noted to change Julian Agyeman's name next to the policy subcommittee to Laura Johnson.

VIII. Other Issues

Any suggestions for potential Stewardship Council members, please forward to Chairman Cross.

IX. Public Comment

- a. **Mike Ryan**, of the Friends of the Fells, stated his concern for the lack of consideration of noise levels in the off-highway vehicle criteria and feels that DCR has conducted a biased process influenced by one interest group. Mr. Ryan feels that other trail users will refrain from using trails in lieu of OHV use and claims that OHV use violates MGL Ch. 132. Gary Briere replied that under the criteria, #6 calls for the standard national noise test to be completed. The regulation was referenced instead of giving a specific noise level just in case regulation changes.
- b. **Dick Miller**, of the Cochituate State Park Advisory Council, reported that the Solar Bees are up and running again. Issues concerning the units' maintenance are addressed by the company as clarified by Jonathan Yeo. Also, Boston Scientific is proposing a helicopter pad on land adjacent to Cochituate State Park. Although the Natick Planning Board and DCR do not want this, Boston Scientific has a temporary permit.
- c. **Claudia Hurley**, of the Friends of Robinson State Park, feels that parks should be considered a different category from forests, and should not be covered under Green certification. Chairman Cross would like a report back from DCR on this issue.
- d. **Heidi Ricci** of Mass Audubon read the statutory requirements of the Stewardship Council make up and suggested a notice be put out. She also stated her concern that the OHV regulation on noise does not adequately deal with wildlife issues. Finally, Ms. Ricci spoke on behalf of the Forest and Parks Partnership, stating that they submitted comments on the public notification of forest cutting policy.

Meeting adjourned 3:05 pm